

**Appropriations Committee  
DSS & DCF Budget Hearing  
February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
Kristen Tierney  
In Support**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Kristen Tierney; I'm a lifelong caregiver of a non-custodial family member. I represent caregivers through my business Turtles & Lemonade.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and the funding that you provided in last year's final budget to many programs that support our loved ones. It means the world to us.

I am asking you today to support additional staffing, specifically at DSS and reinvesting funds in the DCF budget to community based programs that are either currently being funded or have yet to be funded. .

- The issue that I hear the most from caregivers is with respect to **DSS and their low staffing levels**. We urge you to fund additional staff. The issues that I hear and have dealt with myself are: the difficult application process and delays, the difficulty in getting through to the correct person when faced with a deadline (notice or application). These issues are not only barriers to receiving appropriate benefits but cause unnecessary stress to caregivers and their loved ones who struggle with enough obstacles. We appreciate any positions/funding that you can provide to help mitigate these issues.
- I recommend to reinstate the \$1 million funding to address **youth homelessness** (passed in 2010, Conn Gen Stat. 17a-62a). This program would provide vital outreach to youth who experience homelessness, something sorely missing now. It includes youth drop-in centers, walk-in crisis intervention and ongoing support services (part of the Reaching Home Campaign's homeless youth work).

- Please consider reinvesting some of DCF's savings from the reduction of residential and congregate care programs into **transition planning specialists** to promote better transitions for youth. This initiative would align with and support the Program Review and Investigation (PRI) report *DCF Services to Prepare Aging Out of State Care's* recommendations.

The reinvestment of funds for programs that serve our loved ones serves all Connecticut citizens not just through the efficiencies of these programs but in the care and support that they offer those who need them.

Funding additional staff at DSS will help eliminate a barrier to receiving appropriate benefits. We appreciate any positions/funding that you can provide to help mitigate these issues

Thank you again for your thoughtful consideration of the issues that we and our loved ones face daily. Last session was very heartening - moving an inch in the right direction is progress in my book. No progress could have been made without you. We need to continue this progress during this year and beyond.